DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL WOMEN IN THE PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

BY

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ABSTRACT
Paid work of women and participation is very little to register in the papers of government in spite of their significance role in both farm and non-farm activities, which much more restricted by rural customs, beliefs, traditions and values. The importance of these characters like age, education, size of land holding, title of land, social status played a vital role both in society and the field of agriculture. District Muzaffargarh of the Punjab province, Pakistan was selected as universe of the study. A multistage sampling procedure was adopted as by Erbaugh et al. (2003). The basic unit of this study was household as described by UNDP (1996). The results showed that a large majority (77.4%) of wife’s respondents were illiterate with contrast to their husbands who were 64.3% illiterate. Seventy eight percent of the respondents had small landholding upto 12.5 acres. Only 0.1% of wife respondent worked as lady councilor as compared to husband who acquired 0.7% place as male councilor. It was concluded that rural women is several steps behind her counterpart (husband) in all spheres of socio-economic aspects like education, land rights and social status that ultimately hinders them to actively participate in the development process.

Keywords: Rural, Women, Socio-economic, Punjab

INTRODUCTION
Pakistan, a country of valleys and plains has diversified climate and people to adopt different types of ecology and customs with a majority of its population (67.5%) resided in rural areas and are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture that accounts for nearly 23% of country’s national income (GDP) and employs 42% of its work force (Govt. of Pak., 2005). The overall literacy rate is 52.0%, out of this total rural literacy rate is 41.6% which segregated into 56.3% for males and 26.6% for females (Govt. of Pak., 2005). Among major crops cotton, rice, sugarcane and wheat contribute about 2.4%, 13.0%, 0.8% and 3.2% respectively to GDP and accounts for 10.5%, 5.7%, 3.6% and 13.7% respectively to the value added in agriculture (Govt. of Pak, 2005). This all development and prosperity of the nation is the day and night working of farmers, who worked hard on the degraded land while facing the disparity in available facilities and services like health, education, electricity, technology etc. (Hassan, et al., 2005). These farmers are also facing the problems regarding the land, technology and difference in socio-economic conditions (FAO, 2003).

In this scenario, paid work of women and participation is very little to register in the papers of government in spite of their significance role in both farm and non-farm activities, which much more restricted by rural customs, beliefs, traditions and values (Haq, 2003). To increase the role and participation rate of women in the society, it seems necessary to increase their socio-economic characteristics especially those who are residing in the rural communities which ultimately leads to their empowerment in the decision making (Acharya, et al., 2005). Socio-economics refer to environmental, economic, social and industrial patterns, and their linkages that compose the context of development.
"Social and economic factors at various levels of social systems form an environment where people interact through roles and relationships defined by gender, age, ethnicity and other social variables" (Huisinga, 1997). This definition was more concisely referred by Knierin and Siebert (2003) as "social environment is composed of a certain political and economic climate, and socio-cultural habits, norms and rules". The importance of these characters like age, education, size of land holding, title of land, social status played a vital role both in society and the field of agriculture (Hassan, et al., 2002). There is say that education is solution to all the society ills (Khan, 2005a). Education is the process of developing knowledge, wisdom and other required qualities of mind, character and general competency (Evenson and Mwabu, 1998), also shapes the human being great, wise and honorable (Paul and Saadullah, 1991). Education not only uplifts the mental level of an individual but also responsible for bringing a positive change in the attitudes and behaviors which results in seeing the things and their meanings in more broad spectrum and analyzing the problems in rationale ways (Hassan, et al. 2003).

In developing countries like Pakistan, the pace of development is slow as compared to the developed countries and among other reasons, a large number of illiterate women in these countries who now constituting almost half of the population seems a major problem (Abane, 2004). In rural societies of Pakistan, many problems and constraints are experienced by the girls in connection with education like lack of emotional and financial support by the male peers, working and taking care of siblings and sabotage of self-esteem and self-confidence (Ryan and English, 2004). The other thinking is that when she do not do job then why we spent money on her or family incurred expenditure on her education but benefits are enjoyed by her husband (Abane, 2004). The boys education get more importance than girls education and restriction increases when school for girls is not near to house (Rafiq, 1996; JICA, 1999; Khatoon, 2005). Kongolo and Bamgose (2001) in their study in South Africa found that a woman participation is discourage in the development process is mainly due to their illiteracy.

Education leads to many social benefits like lowering the child mortality rate, increase in marriage age, better hygiene facilities, high quality food, higher economic returns, better access to technology and sources of information (Desai, 1998; Mammen and Paxson, 2000; RWDS, 2002 and Haq, 2003). Various studies in different parts of the world showed that educated women farmers did better on their farms, got better yields, improved their access to different sources of information and increased their autonomy in household decision–making (Hill and King, 1991; Kritz and Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1999; Gasperini, 2000; CIDA, 2004; ICRW, 2005; Staff, 2005a). The increase in farm yields was calculated by Evenson and Mwabu (1998) as 10% increase in the education of farmers (measured in years of schooling) improved yields by 4.7%. Also Gasperini (2000) found that all level of small farmers with four years of elementary education got 8.7% more yield as compared to those having no education. Another issue which affects positively the development process in rural areas is land (Haq, 2003). According to the report of IFAD (2000) sixty seven percent of rural population of world rely on access to land for their subsistence living. The report point out the seven points of importance of land for these rural peoples as:

1. ensure their household food security
2. earn income by producing marketable surplus
3. accumulate capital and assets
4. access financial services
5. invest in alternative income-generating strategies
6. use their own labor to sustain the natural resource base
7. build reserves to cope with drought and preserve their assets during periods of agricultural stress"

This shows that land is a security and one way of social status quo in rural communities (Drake, 1999). This is the land which enables them to access to information, skills, markets, credits, assets and control over thereof (Mumtaz, 1994). In Pakistan, land ownership not only serves as economic power structure but also makes able an access to other agricultural inputs and also gives voice in political process (Haq, 2003). Women are the largest group which is excluded from the ownership of many resources especially in case of land i.e. property ownership and right to use it (Shah, 1999). In Indian legislation both men and women have some right to acquire and utilize the land but in actual picture was not be as identified by Santra and Kundu (2001). This fact is also found in our country that the property rights are assigned to both men and women by Islamic law as well as constitutional legislation (Haq, 2003). However, in original women rarely have the rights of management of land and men normally execute the right of decision for the use, purchase and sale, and transfer of land (JICA, 1999) who surveyed 1000 households living in villages in Punjab, Pakistan and found that only 36 women had ownership of land and only 9 had the right...
of management without the permission from their male relatives (Govt. of Pak., 1995). Due to lack of title of land in their name women are facing many formal and informal problems including credit, limited access to cash within the household (Jafry, 2000; Forum for African Women, 2000; Santra and Kundu, 2001 and Squire, 2002), access to agricultural education and training through extension wing (Gender Watch, 2001; Foster, 2001; Gowda, 2001; Santra and Kundu, 2001; Mudukuti, 2003 and Okorley et al., 2004). Banks are reluctant to give loan facilities to women because banks and many other loaning agencies used land as collateral (ADB, 1999). The land tenure system has its effects on the agricultural productivity as there is a hypothesis that the tenants have no land therefore they are least interested in the adoption of modern technologies and improved crop production techniques (Kotile and Martins, 2000; Cole and Johnson, 2002). All this showed that appropriate land tenure, land use and property rights can improve food security, increase the incomes of the rural poor, reduce landholding inequalities and prevent rural conflicts (IFAD, 2000).

Age is another important factor, which exerts its effects on the decision-making and wise use of available resources (Okorley, et al., 2004). The effects of age are positive or negative on the basis of experience gained by the individual (Kurkalova, et al., 2003; Siddiqui, 2003). According to Hart and Wilson (2000) the younger farmers are more innovative and tend to take risk in the farming as compared to older farmers. The same results are also achieved by Lettmann (1995) who stated that younger farmers had a positive attitude towards the conservation of landscape as compared to the older farmers over 50 years. Social status is the position of an individual or a group in a hierarchical social structure (Orr and Dinur, 1995). This status divided the duties and responsibilities of men and women, where male is moving and driving household and female presenting the household with special reference to poverty (Datt and Joliffe, 1998). But in many patriarchal societies like Pakistan, the social status of women is generally sub-ordinate to men (Smith and Haddad, 2000). This inferior status deeper under the feudalism in rural areas and develops injustice and inequality among socio-economic groups (Khan, 2005b).

The impact and importance of socio-demographic characters compel the researcher to design a study on demographic characteristics of rural women in the Punjab, Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY
District Muzaffargarh of the Punjab province, Pakistan was selected as universe of the study. District Muzaffargarh comprise four tehsils namely Alipur, Jatoi, Muzaffargarh, and Kot Adu, which served as study area for present study. All the tehsils were similar in socio-economic and agricultural conditions, having low level of education especially in case of rural women, whereas, Asian Development Bank’s report Muzaffargarh district was in “high deprivation” list along with Bhawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan in the Punjab province (Staff, 2005b). A multistage sampling procedure was adopted as by Erbaugh et al. (2003). A complete list of villages of all the tehsils was collected from District Revenue Office and tally list obtained from Agriculture Department. Then by lottery technique five villages were selected from each tehsil making 20 sample villages. A complete voter list was collected from Election Office of selected villages and a list of married farm families was prepared which was counter checked by a survey conducted with the help of respective Field Assistants of Agriculture Department (Extension Wing) by using a Performa. On the basis of this list, 25 households were selected through random numbers on calculator. Lastly from each randomly selected household one farm family was selected at random from each selected household, thus making a sample of 500 farm families. The basic unit of this study was household as described by UNDP (1996). A well structured questionnaire was prepared on the basis of objectives of the study and pre-tested on 20 farm families and finalized after minor changes. Data were collected through a team from May 10, 2005 to August 30, 2005. The collected data were analyzed with the help of SPSS-12 (Zegeye, et al., 2001) and the analytical techniques applied included t-test, frequency and percentages were computed for different variables. The filled questionnaires were carefully checked and 902 questionnaires were selected as valid and served as total number of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
This section includes the outcomes of the research study related to the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of farm women. The educational status of farm women respondents had been gathered and presented in Table 1, which depicts that a large majority (77.4%) of wife’s respondents were illiterate with contrast to their husbands who were 64.3% illiterate. Out of 22.6% of literate wives 10.2% possessed primary, 6.4% middle, matric3.3%, intermediate 1.8%, bachelor degree holder 0.7% and masters level 0.2% strata of education. At primary level both husbands and wives had same percentage but this gap widened when we proceed at higher level of education.
Zakaria, et al. (2007). Characteristics of rural women

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the respondents according to their educational level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% age</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA/F. Sc.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA/B. Sc.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/M. Sc.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>451</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 902

The over-all literacy rate for district Muzaffargarh was 24.1% out of which 36.96% for males and 10.05% for females according to 1998 census (Govt. of Pak, 2001; Govt of the Punjab, 2004). The overall literacy level it national level for rural areas was 41.6% which when segregated showed 56.3% for male and 26.6% for females (Govt. of Pak., 2005). The in-depth study showed that the present level of rural women is higher than that of 1998 census and it is due to the various educational programmes started by Govt. after 1998 (Govt. of Pak., 2005) but still bit lower than national level. However, the importance of female education had solid effects on increased economic productivity, improvement in health, lowering in fertility and delaying in marriage age which ultimately improved the social and political participation by women's as defined by AUC (2004). The present research findings are supported by Kongolo and Bamgose (2001) they found that educational level of women respondents discourage their active participation in development process because majority (47.4%) of the respondents were illiterate, with 23.0% of those having primary education, 9.2% of those with secondary education, and 2.6% of those with college. Salami, et al. (2002) also reported that majority of the rural women were not educated beyond primary school level in Cameroon. It was also found that mean age of wife respondents was 35.5 years with SD 10.3 and ranged from 15 years to 70 years with contract to their husbands where they had mean age of 41.61 years with SD 11.46 and ranged from 17 to 75 years. The difference between husband and wife's age was on an average 6.11 years. Mudukuti and Miller (2002) while studying women’s educational needs in agriculture in Zimbabwe achieved different results as of present research findings i.e. mean age of rural women was 44 years. The youngest respondents were 19 years of age and oldest one was 74. But Pezesski- Read, et al. (2003) in Iran achieved 31.8 years of average age among his rural women respondents and youngest one was of 12 years of age.

Research studies confirm the importance of land and size of land has its own effect on the social status of an individual of rural communities. Therefore, responses were gathered in relation to family land holdings and type of tenure, and presented in tables 2 & 3.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the respondents according to their family land holding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family land holding</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>% age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (up to 12.5 acre)</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (12.5-25 acres)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (above 25 acres)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>902</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Frequency distribution of the respondents according to their family tenure ship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family tenure ship</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>% age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented-in</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented-out</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-cum-tenant</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>902</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data presented in Table 2 revealed that 78.0% of the respondents had small landholding up to 12.5 acres followed by medium (16.6%) up to 12.5-25 acres and large holders were 5.3% owned land above 25 acres. The results of this data confirmed by Irfan (2005) who found that majority (68.3%) of the respondents had up to 12.5 acres of land, 20.0% owned 12.5 to 25 acres and 11.7% of the respondents had above 25 acres of land. The sequence of owning is same as of present research study. For family tenure ship, the data in Table 3 indicated that a large majority (89.1%) of the respondents were owner, followed by owner-cum-tenant (9.3%), rented in (1.1%) and owner-cum-tenant (0.4%), respectively. The effect of land tenure was confirmed by Cole and Johnson (2000) and Kurkalova et al. (2003).

The main family source of income of all the respondents was Zamindara i.e. Agriculture as depicted in Table 4. However, 19.7% of the respondents worked as laborer other than agriculture. About 7.8% and 7.5% of the respondents had business and service as family sources of income other than main source of income.

**Table 4: Frequency distribution of the respondents according to their family sources of income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of income</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>% age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zamindara</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Malaysia farming was the primary occupation of the majority of the population as reported by Lovenbalk, et al. (2003) and same results were achieved by Onemolease (2002) in women cassava farmers of Nigeria.

Table 5 indicates that 100% of the wife respondents were house wives and only 0.1% of the respondents were lady councilor other than house wife. However, 100% of husband respondents were ordinary farmers. The other social status of the respondents was Numberdar as reported by 1.8% of the respondents. The social status of male councilor was enjoyed by 0.7% of the respondents. About 0.4% of the respondents were Nazim, Naib Nazim and Labour councilor for each category, respectively.

**Table 5: Frequency distribution of the respondents according to their social status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social status</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% age</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naib nazim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male councilor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady councilor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labhour councilor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numberdar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary farmers</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of political party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCLUSION**

It was concluded that rural women is several steps behind her counterpart (husband) in all spheres of socio-economic aspects like education, land rights and social status that ultimately hinders them to actively participate in the development process.
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